

~~TOP SECRET~~ - SENSITIVE

Summary Record of NSC Executive Committee Meeting No. 21,
November 6, 1962 -- 6:15 PM

The meeting was opened by the Vice President at the President's request. The President joined the group twenty minutes after the meeting began.

Secretary Rusk summarized a draft reply to Khrushchev (copy attached, as well as a copy of the final outgoing letter). The letter was revised, approved and later delivered to the Soviet Ambassador here. Secretary Rusk said that Khrushchev had not mentioned IL-28 bombers but referred to a list of weapons which we considered offensive. The Secretary said that the reply contained no ultimatum. The following proposed sentence was deleted: "But I cannot accept this view; I think you would not either if the activities being carried on in a third country were such as to threaten a major alteration in the world balance of power upon which our present uneasy peace depends."

A proposed paragraph on Finland was deleted, which read:

"As you think about this matter, let me ask you to consider how you would have felt if the situation had been reversed and if a similar effort had been made by us in a country like Finland. If in Finland, or even Sweden, there had developed a government increasingly hostile to you and if then, during a very short period of time -- while public and private reassurances were being given -- there had been secretly sent to Finland a whole variety of dangerous means of destruction which were discovered only at the last moment, I am sure you know how the Soviet Government and people would have reacted. And that is how the action of your side in Cuba appears to us."

The following sentence was also deleted: "The same consideration will face the American people as they frame their attitudes toward Cuba after this immediate crisis is surmounted."

At this point the discussion was interrupted and the President brought into the Cabinet Room Mr. Aramburu, the former President of Argentina, and introduced him to those present.

Resuming the discussion, the following concluding sentence was approved: "This is the first necessary step away from the crisis to open the door through which we can move to restore confidence and to give attention to other problems necessary to restore peace."

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The President interrupted to call attention to a news report prominently displayed on page one of the Washington Evening Star alleging that Soviet missiles were being hidden in caves in Cuba.

The President suggested that Mr. McCloy talk to Mr. McKelway of the Star and other editors in an effort to persuade responsible editors to check such stories with the government before they print them and to include in the story a statement to the effect that the government has no information to substantiate the report, if such is the case.

The President then began reading the revised draft reply to Khrushchev. In commenting on the reference to a shift in the balance of power, the President said this statement was not persuasive unless the IL-28 bombers were linked to the entire Soviet action. He suggested that the reference in the first paragraph to the IL-28 bombers was not obnoxious. He felt that the letter could be toned down. He argued that the reference to Finland should be left in. Others said that the Finland paragraph should be saved and used, if necessary, in the next letter.

Secretary Rusk said that we did not have a good contract with Khrushchev but we have to get everything out of their language that we possibly can.

The President commented that the situation was capable of becoming dangerous very quickly. He thought reference should be made to Soviet military personnel in Cuba and he again stated his support of the reference to Finland. Both Mr. Nitze and Ambassador Thompson disagreed and the Finland paragraph was finally deleted.

There followed a discussion as to whether the public should be informed of our efforts to induce the Russians to take out the IL-28 bombers. Some felt that our public posture should be calm and not one which would hot things up. Others felt that we should tell the public of the instructions we had sent last Saturday in an effort to get the Russians to agree to remove the bombers. Mr. Bundy thought we should say publicly that we were discussing the removal of the IL-28 bombers. Secretary Rusk recommended that we say nothing about the bombers until all the missiles were out. The President decided that no official comment on the bombers should be made tonight.

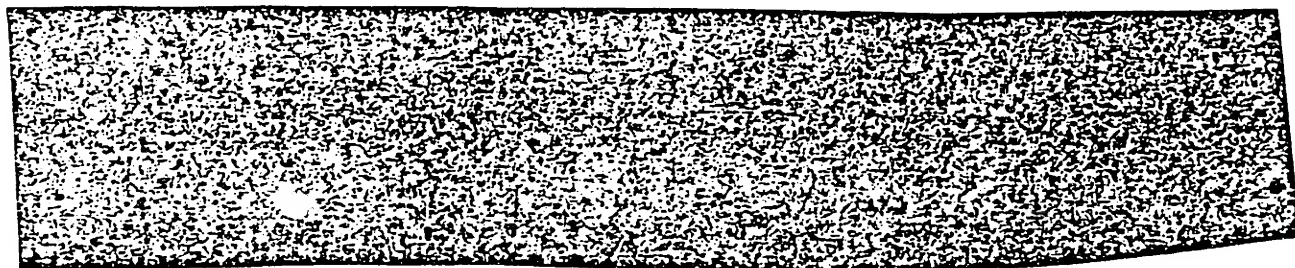
The President was informed that Soviet missiles are actually being removed by Soviet ships. He commented that it was more important to get positive proof of the missiles leaving than it was to get the Soviet bombers out now.

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Mr. Ball reported that the Russians are permitting us to take pictures of the departing missile ships from helicopters or from U.S. ships which come along side the Soviet ships.

The Chairman of the Federal Communications Commission, Mr. Minow, joined the group to discuss the use of two 50-watt medium-wave radio stations, one operated by the USIA and the other by the Navy, to broadcast to Cuba. The Acting Director Wilson of USIA reported that nine commercial stations have been broadcasting nightly to Cuba. The radio time has been purchased by the U.S. These stations are now anxious to return to their regular programs. Mr. Wilson joined Mr. Minow in recommending that the two government-owned stations begin broadcasting this week end under the umbrella of the existing broadcasting of the commercial stations. Mr. Minow said the standard radio band had never before been used by U.S.-owned stations but there was a compelling need to go ahead as recommended. The President agreed.



The program for air reconnaissance tomorrow was discussed.

1. Three U-2 flights over Cuban ports were authorized by the President.

2. The Joint Chiefs of Staff recommended ten low-level missions, four over the Port of Havana, two over the IL-28 bomber bases, two over the Port of Isabella, and two over Guantanamo and Santiago. Secretary McNamara suggested that the President turn down the request for low-level missions over Havana. The President agreed.

General Tylor reported on an abort of a U-2 reconnaissance plane which was half way through its mission when a Soviet radar locked on. Under the existing rule the U-2 broke off. Existing rules call for only one U-2 over the island at a time.



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The President asked what we would do if a reconnaissance plane were shot down. General Taylor said we would halt further missions and try to find out if the Soviets ordered the shoot-down. If so, we would make an air attack on a SAM site.

Secretary Rusk urged that we do nothing which would upset the Castro/Mikoyan negotiations now under way in Havana. If one of our planes were shot down, we would have to respond. This would be awkward in view of the presence in Havana of Mikoyan.

Secretary McNamara said we really did not need the low-level missions over Havana because we were checking on the ships as they move out of Cuba. All Soviet missiles must go as deck cargo because no missile-carrying ships are available to the Russians as of now.

The President returned to his question as to what we would do if a reconnaissance plane were shot at or shot down. He asked for recommendations within the next twenty-four hours.

Mr. McNamara reminded the President that we had told the Russians that they were responsible if any of our planes were shot at or shot down.

The President asked the group to remain subject to call and suggested that we try to get the press to act more responsibly by playing down unsubstantiated reports from Cuban refugees about Soviet missiles being hidden in Cuban caves.

Bromley Smith

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